

Lady Windermere. [Rising.] Ah! you admit you have a hold!

Mrs. Erlynne. Yes, and I will tell you what it is. It is his love for you., Lady Windermere.

Lady Windermere. You expect me to believe that?

Mrs. Erlynne. You must believe it! It is true. It is his love for you that has made him submit to—oh! call it what you like, tyranny, threats, anything you choose. But it is his love for you. His desire to spare you—shame, yes, and disgrace. shame

Lady Windermere. What do you mean? You are insolent!

What have I to do with you?

Mrs. Erlynne. [Humbly.] Nothing. I know it—but I tell you that your husband loves you—that you may never meet with such love again in your whole life—that such love you will never meet—and that if you throw it away, the day may come when you will starve for love and it will not be given to you, beg for love and it will be denied you. Oh! Arthur loves you!

Lady Windermere. Arthur? And you tell me there is nothing between you?

Mrs. Erlynne. Lady Windermere, before Heaven your husband is guiltless of all offence towards you! And I—I tell you that had it ever occurred to me that such a monstrous suspicion would have entered your mind, I would have died rather than have crossed your life or his—oh! died, gladly died!

[Moves away to sofa R.
Lady Windermere. You talk as if you had a heart.

Women like you have no hearts. Heart is not in you. You are bought and sold. [Sits L C.]

Mrs. Erlynne. [Starts, with a gesture of pain. Then restrains herself, and comes over to where Lady Windermere is sitting. As she speaks, she stretches oitt her hands towards her, but does not dare to touch her.] Believe what you choose about me. I am not worth a moment's sorrow. But don't spoil your beautiful young life on my account! You don't know what may be in store for you, unless you leave this house at once. You don't know what it is to fafi into the pit, to be despised, mocked, abandoned, sneered at—to be an outcast! to find the door shut against one, to have to creep in by hideous byways, afraid every moment lest the mask should be stripped from one's face, and all the while to hear the laughter, the horrible laughter of the world, a thing more tragic than all the tears the world has ever shed. You don't know what it